

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 MUSCAT 01124 110736Z

13
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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R 110630Z SEP 76
FM AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2473
INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

S E C R E T MUSCAT 1124

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MAS PFOR MU US UK
SUBJECT: MASIRAH

REF: (A) MUSCAT 1118 (NOTAL); (B) A-59

1. ASKING AMBASSADOR AND DCM INTO HIS PRIVATE OFFICE FOLLOWING SIGNING OF OPIC AGREEMENT SEPT 9, FONMIN ZAWAWI SAID HE WANTED TO RELATE ONE ASPECT OF HIS AUGUST 23-25 OFFICIAL VISIT TO KUWAIT. THIS CONCERNED MASIRAH ISLAND. ZAWAWI SAID HE HAD REALLY NOT EXPECTED KUWAITIS WOULD SUBJECT HIM TO SUCH AN OPEN PRESS CONFERENCE BUT PERHAPS HE HAD NOT RECKONED CORRECTLY WITH KUWAIT'S MININFO, SHAIKH JABIR AL-ALI - "A SEET PERSON BUT ONE WHO OFTEN DOES NUST OPPOSITE TO WHAT YOU THINK HE WILL." AT ANY RATE, ZAWAWI SAID HE HAD DECIDED IN ADVANCE THAT IF ASKED ABOUT FUTURE ACTIVITIES ON MASIRAH OF ANY FOREIGN NATIONS, HE WOULD REPLY WITH FLAT DENIAL OF ANY OMANI INTENTION TO ALLOW "BASES" OR "FACILITIES" TO FOREIGNERS. AS THE QUESTION WAS INDEED RAISED, HE HAD REPLIED IN THAT FASHION.

2. MINISTER TOLD US OMANGOV HAS DECIDED THAT BEST TERM TO BE USED IF AND AS NECESSARY TO DESCRIBE WHATEVER FUTURE USE MAY BE MADE OF HASIRAH BY USG OR OTHERS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH BILATERAL ARRANGEMENTS WHICH OMAN EXPECTS IT WILL BE NEGOTIATING WITH US LATER ON, IS "VISITS." THIS TERM, IN

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ARABIC SIYARAAT, IS LESS SUSCEPTIBLE TO EXAGGERATION AND

HARMFUL PROPAGANDA BY THOSE SUCH AS IN CERTAIN PRESS CIRCLES WHO WOULD MAKE TROUBLE FOR OMAN AND ITS FRIENDS. AND MORE-OVER, IT WOULD SEEM AN ACCURATE TERM TO DESCRIBE WHAT IN FACT WILL TAKE PLACE. ZAWAWI NOTED THAT WHILE IN LONDON FOLLOWING HIS KUWAITI VISIT, HE MADE THIS SAME POINT TO A WELL-PLACED FCO ACQUAINTANCE. HE OBSERVED THAT SOONER OR LATER THE PRESS, ESPECIALLY IN SUCH AN OPEN COUNTRY AS U.S., INEVITABLY WOULD GET AROUND TO ASKING QUESTIONS ABOUT MASIRAH THAT WOULD NEED ANSWERS.

3. AMBASSADOR SAID THAT, SPEAKING PERSONALLY, THIS SEEMED EMINENT GOOD SENSE, AND PROMISED TO INFORM WASHINGTON OF MINISTER'S REMARKS.

4. COMMENT. BY THUS DELIBERATELY DRAWING ATTENTION TO THEIR OWN SENSITIVITY ABOUT THE FORM THUS EVENTUAL PUBLICITY OF USE OF MASIRAH AIRFIELD BY FOREIGN POWERS MAY TAKE, THE OMANIS CLEARLY EXPECT THAT BOTH WE AND THE BRITISH WILL COOPERATE SO AS TO KEEP THEM FORTIFIED IF NOT NECESSARILY IMMUNE AGAINST CRITICISM IN TIME TO COME. THIS MAKES IT ALL THE MORE IMPORTANT FOR EMBASSY MUSCAT TO BE ADVISED QUICKLY IN EVENT STATESIDE PUBLICITY DEVELOPS ON SUBJECT.
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